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Phyllis & Casey **22** COVER STORY

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# Meet The Team



**Betty Lee**  
Publisher  
betty.lee@realproducersmag.com  
336-414-3324



**Jacki Donaldson**  
Content Coordinator  
jacki.donaldson@n2co.com  
453-332-5171



**Maddie Podish**  
Writer/Social Media  
misparks7382@gmail.com  
757-634-8998



**Amber Perdue**  
Photographer  
amberperduephotography@gmail.com  
540-293-4697



**Kristina Rose**  
Photographer  
www.krosephoto.com  
540-560-9639



**Bryce Scott**  
Photographer & Videographer  
Rapid Imagery  
rapidimagery@gmail.com  
540-522-5467



**Sean Knoedler**  
Photographer  
1725 Media Co.  
sean@1725media.com  
434-259-0484



**Bianca Allison**  
Events  
bianca.k.allison@gmail.com  
434-841-4188



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Hello, Real Producers!

Spring is in full bloom, bringing fresh energy to the real estate market and our incredible community of top-producing agents and industry partners. We're honored to feature three outstanding professionals who exemplify excellence, leadership, and service in this issue of *Blue Ridge Real Producers*.

This publication would not be possible without the continued support of our preferred partners, whose dedication and expertise help elevate our real estate community. Their contributions allow us to showcase the stories of top producers and industry leaders while fostering meaningful connections within the market. Please take a moment to recognize and support these outstanding professionals who help make our magazine a reality each month.

As always, this magazine is about celebrating the best of the best, and we thank you for being part of this journey with us. Here's to a successful May filled with new opportunities, strong connections, and continued growth!



Be Blessed,  
**BETTY**  
Betty Lee, Publisher  
*Blue Ridge Real Producers*  
betty.lee@realproducersmag.com  
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At the core of our success lies a simple yet powerful belief: **The heartbeat of Real Producers is to elevate the culture of our real estate community by inspiring us to know one another better. When we know one another better, we treat each other better, When we treat each other better, we create a culture of trust, and when we trust one another, doing business together becomes an honor and a privilege.**



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# Maria CARRENO

PINK DOOR

HOUSE DECOR

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH  
PHOTOS BY SEAN KNOEDLER,  
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If you've ever driven through Lynchburg and spotted a home with a striking pink door, you might have unknowingly stumbled upon the inspiration behind one of the area's leading home staging companies—Pink Door House Decor. Founded by Maria Carreno, the company has quickly become a go-to resource for transforming properties into irresistible, market-ready homes. With a flair for design, an eye for detail, and a strong family support system, Maria has turned her creative passion into a thriving business that is helping homes sell faster and stand out in a competitive market.

Maria's journey to entrepreneurship began far from Lynchburg in her home country of Venezuela. She was pursuing an engineering degree at a public university when she moved to the United States to be closer to family. However, continuing her education proved difficult due to the high cost of tuition. Instead, she shifted her focus to full-time work and began navigating the complexities of adulthood in a new country. Language was another hurdle—while she had some knowledge of English, achieving fluency



**“TO ME, SUCCESS MEANS MEETING MY BASIC NEEDS WHILE LIVING WITH A SENSE OF EASE AND FULFILLMENT.”**



took time. “At first, I was constantly translating in my head,” she recalls. “But once I started thinking in English, I knew I was becoming fluent. It's funny—I feel like I have two personalities, one in each language.”

Pink Door House Decor was born from an unexpected source of inspiration—Maria's home. The pink front door became a local conversation piece, drawing compliments from neighbors and visitors alike. Encouraged by the positive feedback, Maria realized she had a natural talent for design. When a local REALTOR® asked if she offered staging services, Maria saw an opportunity. She enrolled in a business class to develop a formal plan, and with the support of her family, Pink Door House Decor officially opened its doors.

From the start, the business was a family affair. Maria handles the marketing, social media, and client communication, while her parents do much of the physical work. Her mother, Desiree, a skilled seamstress,

sews custom pillows and reupholsters furniture, adding a unique, personal touch to their projects. Her father, Fernando, manages the heavy lifting, moving furniture and assisting with the hands-on staging process. Her siblings also lend a hand when needed, helping with staging tasks and supporting the business during busy periods. The family even owns a 1,500-square-foot warehouse filled with carefully curated furniture and decor pieces, allowing them to stage homes quickly and effectively. “I'm incredibly grateful for my family's support,” Maria says. “They've backed me financially and put in the hard work to help make this business a reality.”

Pink Door House Decor has made a name for itself in the local real estate market in just two years. Maria is known for her meticulous attention to detail and flexibility, often quickly accommodating last-minute requests. She believes that staging is essential in helping potential buyers visualize a home's possibilities. Her company

stages vacant and occupied homes, sometimes enhancing a seller's existing furniture with stylish additions from her inventory. “Staging transforms a house into a home—it allows buyers to connect with the space emotionally,” she explains.

As her business grows, Maria is already planning for the future. Her long-term vision includes hiring employees, mainly to ease the physical demands on her parents as they get older. She also hopes to develop a more structured design process, offering clients clear, curated staging packages. She aims to create a seamless, high-quality experience that sets Pink Door House Decor apart.

Outside her professional life, Maria prioritizes balance

and personal well-being. She defines success not by financial gain but by achieving freedom and a sense of flow. “To me, success means meeting my basic needs while living with a sense of ease and fulfillment,” she shares. She maintains an active lifestyle, aiming to hit the gym four times a week, and enjoys spending time with her goldendoodle, Cooper. Their bond was serendipitous—she came across him unexpectedly and decided to adopt him on the spot.

From a pink front door that sparked a creative vision to a successful family-run business, Maria Carreno is transforming Lynchburg's real estate scene one beautifully staged home at a time.

**CONTACT MARIA CARRENO:**  
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# CHRISTINA HOLMES & LIBBY HOWELL

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*The Blue  
Ridge Group of  
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**Blood does not always determine family—often, the people who stand by you with loyalty and care do. That’s exactly the kind of bond Christina Holmes and Libby Howell share. As the driving force behind Blue Ridge Group powered by Keller Williams, their partnership goes beyond business. With Libby’s seasoned expertise and Christina’s fresh perspective, they’ve built a thriving real estate team rooted in trust and genuine compassion for their clients.**

Libby’s path into real estate was unexpected. While working as an office manager, her broker recognized her potential, noting how many people she knew and how natural she would be as an agent. Recognizing her value, her broker encouraged her to get licensed, and soon, she was working full-time as an agent. Within three years, she obtained her broker’s license.

Libby and Christina have built their partnership on mutual respect and complementary strengths. Christina deeply admires Libby’s dedication to doing things right, no matter how small the task. Christina often recalls a small yet telling moment that perfectly reflects Libby’s character. After picking up several bolts at a store, Libby carefully returned each one to its proper place. Reflecting on that moment, Christina says, “She doesn’t cut corners. Like everything she does, she’s going to do it professionally, she’s going to do it right, and she’s going to do it with honesty and integrity.”

On the other hand, Libby values how tech savvy Christina is, recognizing it as a vital asset in today’s industry. She admits that technology isn’t her strong suit but appreciates how Christina’s expertise fills that gap. “I’m not that technically proficient,” Libby shares. “That’s where she is. So she brings that strength to me.”

Real estate is about much more than just making a sale for both women. They are deeply committed to their clients and the community they serve. Their dedication goes well beyond the typical responsibilities of a REALTOR®. From helping a seller relocate while caring for 88 cats to driving clients to doctors’ appointments, they are willing to do whatever they can to support their clients. Christina sums up their mindset simply: “It’s always more than a sale.”

Their growth has been entirely organic. Together, they’ve built a thriving team



Christina Holmes



Libby Howell

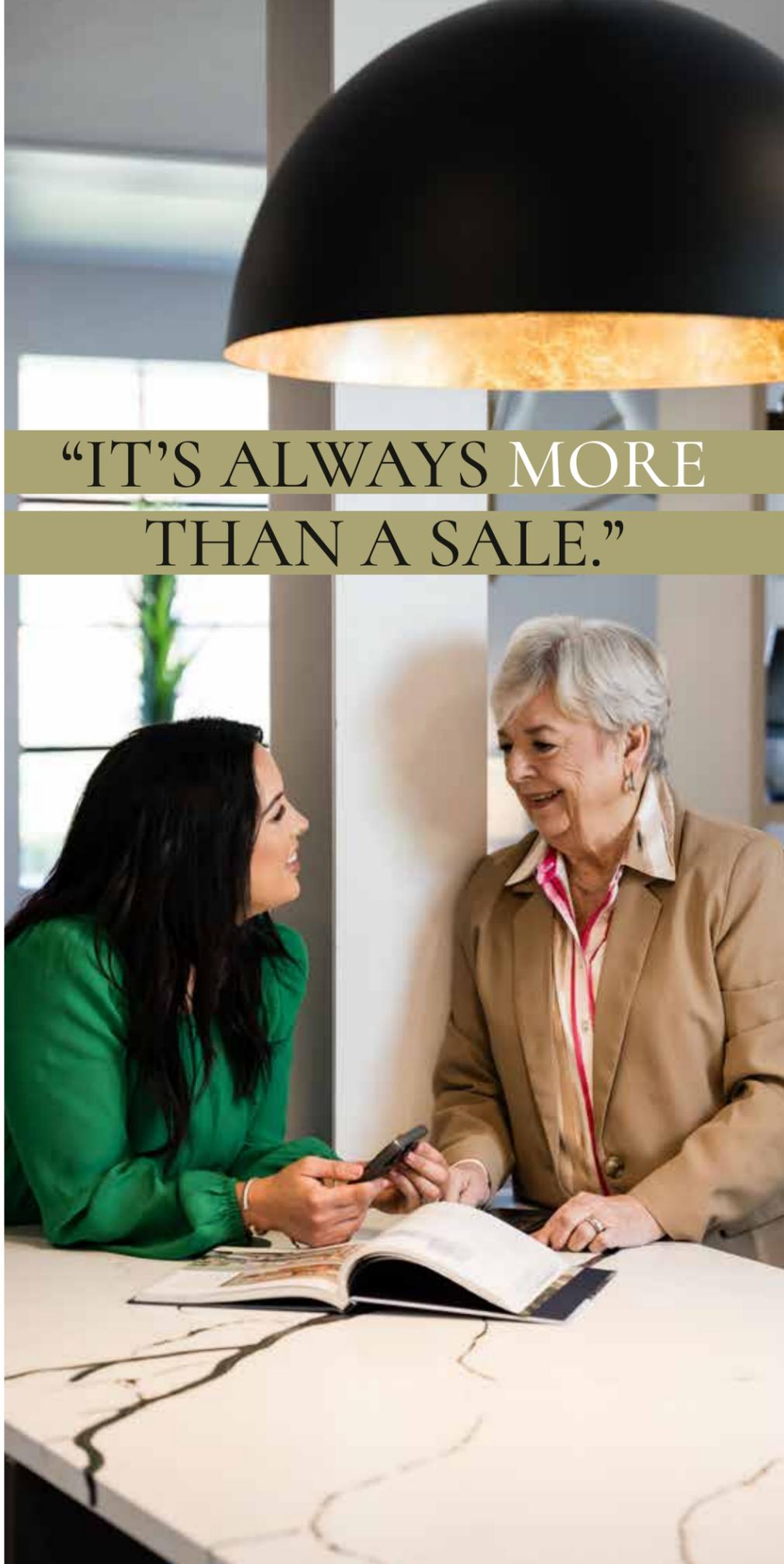
of 10 agents under the Blue Ridge Group umbrella. Rather than actively recruiting, they focus on finding the right fit for their team. Christina and Libby help their agents develop and succeed, making mentorship and support a cornerstone of their leadership.

Beyond their day-to-day work, Christina and Libby are passionate about giving back. Christina supports the Homes for Heroes program, which supports military veterans, law enforcement, teachers, healthcare workers, EMS, and firefighters. Through the program, she gives back a portion of her commission to these local heroes. To date, she has contributed over \$230,000 and is ranked No. 1 in Virginia and No. 17 in the nation. She takes pride in knowing this achievement directly benefits those who serve the community.

The Blue Ridge Group also actively participates in local events, such as their annual trick-or-treat event and a festive meet-and-greet with Santa. These gatherings are about more than just networking—they're an opportunity to appreciate the community that supports them. Christina believes that giving back is essential, ensuring they remain connected to the people they serve.

Libby's deep roots in the community also play a significant role in their business. Her involvement with her church, the Chamber of Commerce, and other local organizations has fostered strong, long-standing relationships. Over the years, she has sold some houses multiple times and is now helping the grandchildren of her former clients buy homes—an experience that underscores her lasting impact on the community.

Looking ahead, the Blue Ridge Group's future is simply a continuation of what Christina and Libby do best—serving with heart. Libby jokes that she may never fully retire as long as there's work to be done. With a smile, Christina assures her there will always be a place for her. Their story is far from finished. As long as they have people to help and lives to impact, they'll keep showing up—just as they always have.



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# PHYLLIS & JOHNSON CASEY JOHNSON

STORY BY MADDIE PODISH • PHOTOS BY KRISTINA ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY

For Phyllis and Casey Johnson, real estate is more than a career—it's a shared passion, a family legacy, and a true partnership they've built on trust, respect, and complementary strengths. The mother-daughter team with RE/MAX Lakefront Realty has made a remarkable impact on the Smith Mountain Lake real estate market and are known for their dedication, expertise, and genuine care for their clients.

Phyllis began her real estate career in 1986. She chuckles and shares, "Back then, we didn't have cell phones or computers—my first phone was a mobile one in a bag!" With a background in inside sales management—selling parts and tools, air compressors, and hydraulic jacks—her boyfriend's sister, Audrey Agee, encouraged her to pursue real estate. That leap of faith has paid off for nearly four decades.

Throughout her career, Phyllis has seen the industry transform but believes the core principles remain the same: hard work, honesty, and follow-through. Her extensive knowledge and reliability are well-known, with other agents frequently seeking her advice. Despite her self-described "old school" ways, Phyllis's deep understanding of contracts, dock permits, and subdivision development makes her a go-to expert. Over the years, she has developed six subdivisions around the lake and helped numerous clients turn their dreams of lakefront living into reality.

Casey practically grew up in the business, tagging along with her mother to showings as a little girl. However, her own path initially led elsewhere. After graduating high school at 17, she earned a bachelor's degree in film and worked at Disney World in Florida. With her mom's real estate business thriving and the cost of living in Florida climbing, she returned home and became her mother's assistant.





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*-Phyllis*



For two years, Casey handled administrative work before earning her real estate license. Her creativity and tech savviness brought a fresh edge to the team. She now manages all listing photos, drone shots, and videos—a skillset she honed from her college days as a sports photographer and director. Her visual storytelling has elevated their marketing, making their waterfront listings shine.

Casey's commitment to growth and leadership is equally impressive. She serves on the Chamber of Commerce board, the Chamber's Leadership Academy, Get2KnowNoke Group, and Recreational Development of Franklin County Committee. Recently, she received the prestigious RE/MAX Torchbearer award, recognizing her as one of the top five RE/MAX agents under 40 in the state of Virginia.

Phyllis and Casey's contrasting strengths make them a perfect team. Phyllis handles contracts, CMAs, and complex permits with precision, while Casey takes the lead on marketing, social media, and technology. They seamlessly managed \$27.5 million in sales in 2024 without an admin or transaction coordinator, relying on constant communication, punch lists, and phone calls throughout the day.

Their teamwork extends beyond business operations. They are deeply involved in their community, frequently sponsoring and volunteering for local events. They are regular top sponsors for the Charity Home Tour and volunteer for the Agape golf tournaments. Casey also donates her time to capture photos at Special Olympics events, wine festivals, and Chamber events.

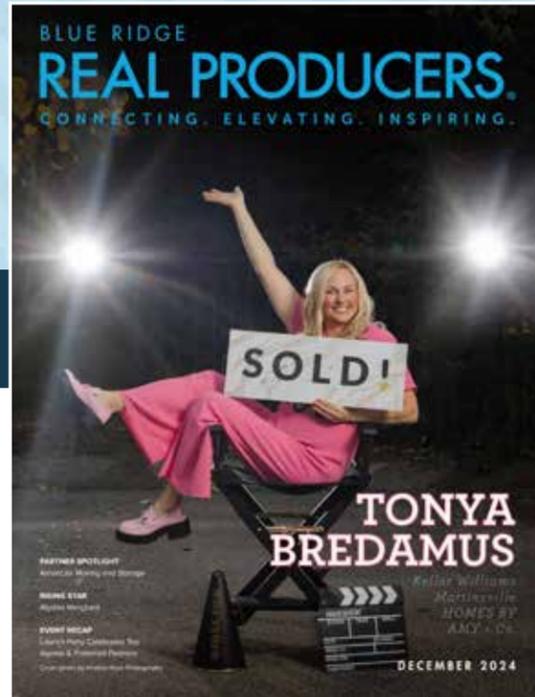
Phyllis names working with her daughter as one of the greatest rewards of her career. She has watched Casey grow into a skilled, compassionate real estate professional. Casey, in turn, describes her mother as both her best friend and mentor. Their relationship is built on honesty, respect, and an intuitive understanding that doesn't require a mediator.

Phyllis and Casey do not measure success isn't by the number of transactions but by the quality of service they provide. Whether helping first-time buyers find their perfect home or assisting retirees in securing their dream lakefront property, they find joy in creating meaningful experiences for their clients.

As they continue to expand their business, Phyllis and Casey remain committed to their core values: integrity, service, and community involvement. With Casey's rising leadership in the real estate world and Phyllis's wealth of knowledge, the Johnson team is a true powerhouse—proving that the combination of experience, innovation, and a strong mother-daughter bond is a winning formula in real estate.



# FAQs



**Q: Who Receives This Magazine?**

**A:** The magazine goes to the top 300 real estate agents in Central and Southwest Virginia, based on their sales volume from the previous year, and our preferred partners. With thousands of agents in the region, being part of this elite group is a testament to your hard work, dedication, and success.

**Q: What Is The Goal Of This Magazine?**

**A:** We believe in the power of collaboration and growth through a strong professional network. We bring together the top 300 real estate agents and preferred partners in each market to form an exclusive, high-achieving community. We share their stories, successes, market trends, and upcoming events—anything that will connect, inform, and inspire.

**Q: Does Real Producers Have Events?**

**A:** Yes! We host exclusive networking events throughout the year.

**Q: What Is The Process For Being Featured In This Magazine?**

**A:** Anyone on the Top 300 list can nominate other real estate agents, businesses, brokers, owners, or themselves. Office leaders can also submit nominations. We review all agents who come to our attention. Since we don't know everyone's story, we rely on your nominations to highlight deserving candidates. While we cannot guarantee a feature, we encourage you to meet with

Betty, support Real Producers, and attend our private events to increase your chances.

**Q: What Does A Feature Story Cost?**

**A:** Feature stories are entirely free, so we encourage nominations.

**Q: Who Are The Preferred Partners?**

**A:** They are the best local businesses in their category, and you can find them in our index at the front of the magazine. We do not select businesses at random or accept all who approach us. Every business featured has been recommended, ensuring credibility and quality. Our team conducts additional vetting to ensure businesses align with our standards and add value to our network. We aim to create a powerhouse network of top real estate agents and trusted companies to strengthen our community.

**Q: How Can I Recommend A Business?**

**A:** To recommend a business that collaborates with top real estate agents, contact Betty Lee at [betty.lee@realproducersmag.com](mailto:betty.lee@realproducersmag.com) | 336-414-3324.

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